

Creating Voice-and-Music Structure in a Podcast

Structure

Many podcasts consist of music (often used repeatedly over episodes as theme music) and voice (typically used for introductions, monologues, narrations, expositions, interviews, etc.). Audacity can help you manipulate voice and music tracks to create an appropriate *structure* for a podcast. We will use the term structure here to refer to the interplay between the music and voice tracks.

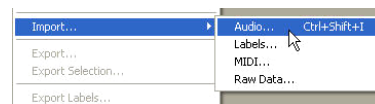
Conventional Structure Example

Below is a representation of a very conventional podcast structure. Note the music track begins the podcast and then fades out as the voice track begins. The voice track continues solo and delivers the major content of the podcast. Once the voice track nears its end, the music track starts fading in. The music track then concludes the podcast, ending, perhaps, with a fade out.



Let's see how we can achieve a conventional voice-and-music structure by using Audacity.

Under the File menu, choose Import and then Audio. Navigate to your music and voice files, select them, and click on the Open button.

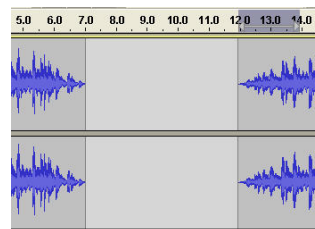


Click in somewhere near the middle of the music track. Under the Edit menu, choose Split to create two separate clips on the music track.

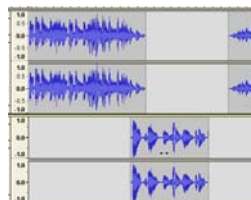


From the Editing Tools, choose the Time Shift Tool and drag the newly separated right clip on the music track toward the right, farther down the timeline.

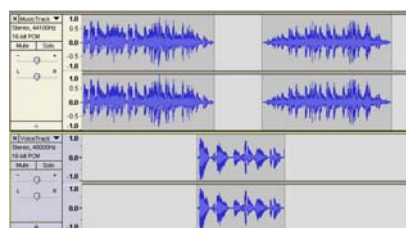
From the Editing Tools, choose the Selection Tool. Highlight the last few seconds of the left clip on the music track, and under the Effects menu, choose Fade Out.



Highlight the first few seconds of the right clip on the music track, and under the Effects menu, choose Fade In. We have now created within the music track a *pocket* for our voice track. By the way if the right clip on the music track does not have a clear musical ending, then add a Fade Out at its conclusion.



Now let's position our voice content. From the Editing Tools, choose the Time Shift Tool and drag the clip on the voice track to the right. Position the voice clip so that it begins as the first music clip fades out. You should see an overlapping of voice and music.



Next, slide the second music clip so that it begins its soft entrance near the end of the voice clip. Again, you should see an overlapping.

Play the combined tracks and be prepared to make adjustments. You want a smooth transition between tracks with the vocal content clear and uncrowded.

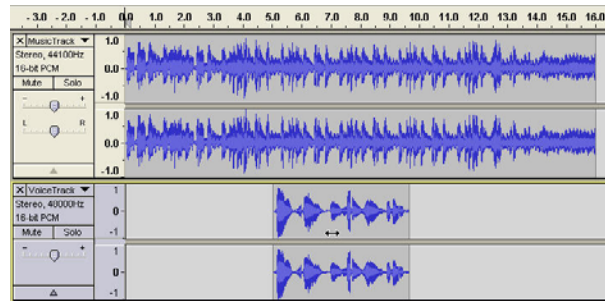
Ducking Structure Example

Below is a representation of a podcast structure using ducking. Note the music track begins the podcast and then fades to a lower level as the voice track begins. With the music continuing at a low level, the voice track delivers the major content of the podcast. Once the voice track nears its end, the music track starts increasing in volume. The music track then concludes the podcast, ending, perhaps, with a fade out.

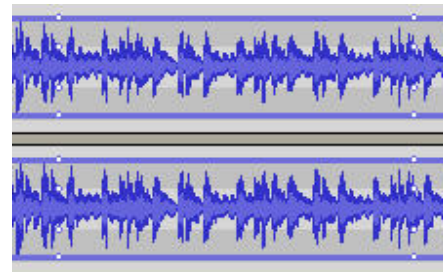


Let's see how we can achieve a ducking voice-and-music structure by using Audacity.

Open your voice and music tracks in Audacity. Be sure to select a music track that is longer than the voice track. Use the Time Shift Tool to position the voice track several seconds down the timeline.



From the Editing Tools, choose the Envelope Tool and click into the music track in two places: a second or two before the voice track begins and a second or two after the voice track ends. Notice that a set of white dots will serve as markers for the envelope that you are creating.



Next, we will create the ducking effect manually. With the Envelope Tool still selected, click into the music track two or three seconds after the voice track begins. Hold down the mouse button and drag downward to decrease the volume.

Now click into the music track two or three seconds before the voice track ends. Hold down the mouse button and drag downward to decrease the volume.

Adjust the volume levels with the Envelope Tool so that, except during transitions, the volume of the music remains at a constant and non-distracting level during the delivery of the voice content.

